

A Husbanding Agent in India, Could Close a Gap in Aviation Logistical Support.

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"A Husbanding Agent in India, Could Close a Gap in Aviation
Logistical Support."

Contemporary Issues Paper

Submitted by: Captain M. E. Hernandez

CG #6, FACAD: Major D. J. Verda

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"Get as much as you can, as quick as you can and as often as you can".¹ These are the words—and a basic philosophy—from a senior logistician who is wise to the importance of pushing and receiving critical aviation parts to awaiting supply and maintenance customers onboard transiting naval carriers(CVN) and amphibious (ARG) ships.

The logistical chain in the Western Pacific (WestPac) is well established and relies heavily upon husbanding agents in different countries, from Australia, Thailand and Singapore. After replenishing in vicinity of Singapore, a transient vessel will forego logistical support until the next surface re-supply opportunity occurs the Indian Ocean or the Gulf of Oman; outside the Persian Gulf. The aircraft onboard deploying carriers and amphibious ships have the potential to decline in readiness soon after departing from or near (the area of) Singapore. A husbanding agent service utilized from a point in southern India, would directly benefit transiting aviation supply and maintenance customers and aircraft readiness, by providing critical aircraft material within a replenishment void between Singapore and the Persian Gulf.

In the western pacific (WestPac), aviation logisticians respect the challenges in supporting transiting Navy and Marine aircraft. They also respect the supply and maintenance personnel's goals to maintain high levels of aviation readiness

for these aircraft. Rates set by higher commands, expect the total number of deploying aircraft (per unit) to be at a minimum of seventy five percent (mission capable) rate at all times. Basically, out of all aircraft assigned to each deploying unit onboard the naval vessel, seventy five percent have to be in a condition to execute all or most of the intended missions.

By utilizing a global network of husbanding agents within an established (western pacific) logistical chain these transiting customers (maintaining these aircraft at peak readiness), can count on crucial aviation material to arrive ahead of them and therefore help support this peak readiness. Material arriving ahead vice chasing from behind will support efforts to repair the aircraft, a weapon system with an end result of providing future air support missions for ground operations in the Global War on Terrorism.

A husbanding agent providing support out of India, would influence an increase in aviation readiness rates that supply and maintenance customers struggle to achieve and maintain on the transit through WestPac. This increase would come by cutting a "gap" in half between Singapore and the Persian Gulf. Also it would directly support customers by not having to wait for a supply replenishment rendezvous, originating from Jebel Ali or Dubai (inside the Persian Gulf). A S-6 U.S. Naval officer (aviation stores onboard CVNs & ARGs) is familiar with the

anticipation regarding replenishment time after departing Singapore and when asked about an average time in receiving a replenishment in transit, he stated;

"...five days to be in range of a replenishment ship to meet them at full speed half way. Expect both (ships) can travel at approximately thirty knots...most optimistic with no obstacles or other commitments, on an average we could expect **ten days**." ²

By providing necessary aviation material sooner than the average ten days, between Singapore and Persian Gulf originated replenishment, the Navy and Marine Aviation arsenal would be at a higher readiness state prior to entering the Strait of Hormuz—the entrance to the Persian Gulf. This logistical chain (that crucial aviation parts travel within) relies heavily upon contracted husbanding agents in several countries throughout the Pacific.

These WestPac husbanding agents will continue to be crucial assets who assist in maintaining Navy/Marine aircraft the readiness numbers, up at the appropriate percentages. With out these agents and the services they provide, the air logistical chain and aviation readiness, directly supported, will be severely strained. Meanwhile the Global War on Terrorism will continue to rotate Naval and Marine air units in and out of Iraq and Afghanistan—via the Persian Gulf and Singapore void, thus keeping pressure on aviation logistics throughout Westpac.

Husbanding Agents in countries like Australia, Singapore and Thailand support aviation logistics, by ensuring material is delivered in time for loading on replenishing naval vessels or for the arriving Navy & Marine air forces onboard CVNs or ARGs.

Australia

Initially after departing from Hawaii (a final U.S. re-supply point prior to deploying the Persian Gulf) and stocking up on crucial replenishment material arriving for aircraft onboard, Naval/Marine air forces will occasionally transit to popular Australian import cities such as Perth/Fremantle and Darwin. In Australia, aviation logistical units (both a Navy and Marine) utilize a husbanding agent contractor based in Sydney. With satellite agents in these popular import cities, our embarked air supply personnel are able to retrieve the crucial re-supply aviation parts via commercial means (Federal Express, DHL, etc.) and free of customs delays. The needed material is obtained and delivered by the agents from customs to dock piers where supply personnel (usually called "beach detachments") or the entire naval vessels have arrived and or await for loading, stowing and distribute replenishment material and critical aircraft parts to mechanics for awaiting maintenance on aircraft.

Since the Australian customs agency is located in Sydney, there is a challenge to first find and retrieve the aircraft

material out of customs (from stateside sources) then forward to awaiting aviation customers, usually on the other side of the continental island. A benefit in the Australian husbanding agent support is the transportation assets utilized for crucial material as pointed out, again by a former aviation customer, S-6 Officer;

"...key issue is terrain and customs. They (customs) are tough in Australia,...they stop every thing for a review to insure not rocks come into the country....and transportation lanes are not proficiently used..."³

If Navy & Marine air forces are to arrive in Darwin, Perth/Fremantle material must be flown or trucked to its' proper destination. With the Australian continent consisting mostly of vast terrain, it's vital to have a local company insuring inbound material, arrives when and where needed with in a (usually) short import period. A senior logistician notes the challenges in and the benefits provided by the husbanding agent in Australia;

"...husbanding agent support in Australia,...have an extensive network of agents throughout the country who are well versed in the efficient movement of critical priority material anywhere in the country. Sydney is the easiest entry point for FEDEX/DHL (commercial couriers) type material, so material typically enters the country there...(the husbanding agent) is normally able to then forward to any of the major points within two days. The shear terrain and habitation of the country make remote locations a bit more difficult."⁴

The Australian husbanding agent often is a professional at this because they utilize (and own) local aircraft and trucking assets to move material from city to city.

Like all Westpac husbanding agents, the agents in these cities are contacted early enough with aviation supply logisticians, to assure communication and verifications regarding what material is coming in, where, when, and finally its ultimate destination, the transiting aviation Navy & Marine customers.

Thailand

Naval and Marine aviation customers are continually challenged in Thailand because of not only vast terrain, language barriers and culture difference, but most notably—customs obstacles. "Thailand's extremely stringent customs laws make it extremely difficult to get any material from outside the country into a U.S. unit visiting port."⁵ Towns like Phuket and Pattaya, Thailand are popular import spots for U.S. vessels however, replenishment efforts ultimately relay on the husbanding agent services.

Like Australia, the husbanding agent in Thailand will use their asset and associations to acquire material out of customs and then forward on to awaiting beach detachments and naval CVNs & ARGs. "They know the lay of the land and contacts in getting things done in Thailand."⁶ Though material is flown in quickly via commercial means, foreign material is scrutinized heavily

and is usually delayed weeks, months, and possibly, years. A husbanding agent "...allows us to leverage our resources by using the...contractor to provide...on-the-ground support and supervision of services provided as well as the scheduling of the services."⁷

Counter Argument

The current method works. "The wheel works, why add another spoke"⁸ was the answer from a states side aviation supply officer and expeditor, regarding a possible benefit to aviation readiness by utilizing a husbanding agent from India. Crucial aviation material required by transiting Navy/Marine air forces, is delivered via scheduled Replenishments-at-Sea (RAS)/Underway Replenishments (UNREP,) out of the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) sufficiently and regularly. This material arrives into commercial airports via commercial couriers (Federal Express & DHL) and is managed by supply personnel (again the "beach detachment" personnel) assigned from the inbound, transiting naval ships. Another aviation supply officer and former "deployed customer" suggest that;

"...from a logistical standpoint using Diego Garcia would be beneficial (instead of India) for several reasons; has a (U.S.) military presence already, it's along a AMC (air mobility command) and has repair capabilities for ships."⁹

Another option is to utilize Diego Garcia. The island of Diego Garcia is an established military logistical hub and the Air Mobility Command (AMC) channel flights are frequently flying

in and out of Diego Garcia delivering supplies. Crucial aviation material, not arriving to the transiting aviation forces, could be diverted to Diego Garcia via the scheduled AMC channel flights, for further transfer, to the awaiting aviation units.

Rebuttal

Diego Garcia is established militarily however; "no commercial flights are allowed to land there, secondly the island is limited to AMC flights only. Most crucial aviation material is flown to customers by commercial couriers. The current chain does accomplish supporting the aviation forces transiting into the Persian Gulf. Aviation required material is delivered and does arrive to awaiting maintainers via UNREPs/RASs however, similar to war fighting doctrine in the Marine Corps, logistics at all levels, needs to remain innovative and continue to improve in-order to support the ultimate customers, the Warfighters. Methods can be improved; turn around times (the time it takes for material to arrive to the customer) can be reduced for the benefit of the customer, the awaiting aviation maintainers. Aviation readiness rates could be influenced earlier prior to entering Persian Gulf vice waiting for out bound supply ships.

Conclusion

Utilizing the husbanding agent service in locations such as Mumbai or Goa, India (where Navy vessels have recently visited)

could directly support transiting aviation customers. Shipping crucial aircraft material between Singapore and the Persian Gulf would lessen the challenge in targeting a "load out" schedules (of the replenishment vessels) inside the Persian Gulf and chance missing a future rendezvous (RAS) with inbound Navy & Marine air forces. Receiving aviation material sooner (than the Persian Gulf) would allow a greater opportunity to have aircraft at a higher readiness state faster as CAPTAIN Dunn, U.S. Navy, Supply Corps states;

"...because a ship could get last minute parts delivery and support just prior to entering the 5th Fleet AOR (area of operation) which may give them those few extra "up" aircraft going into the fight".¹⁰

The benefit is also felt by a former supply officer for a U.S. Navy carrier, CDR Hornbrook, U.S. Navy, Supply Corps says;

"...would definitely benefit the carrier strike group with carrier onboard delivers (CODs)..."¹¹

Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQ FREEDOM may not be ending for some time, so the need for aviation support for ground combat troops will remain a necessity. This aviation support comes in the form of Naval and Marine Corps aircraft that are crucial and reliable "weapons in the sky". These weapons, while in transit, need to be maintained and ready to perform as soon as possible and prior to entering the area of operation that ground troops are executing missions. Aircraft

readiness is heavily relied upon husbanding agent services throughout the Westpac transit. If a husbanding agent service is utilized out of India, it would close a gap and add a crucial link in the aviation logistical chain. The service will assist to "getting as much as you can...as often as you can" logistics approach, and ultimately provide reliable aviation weapons when needed.

Notes

1. James L. Dunn, CAPTAIN, U.S. Navy.,
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2. Julius Arnett, Lieutenant, U.S. Navy.,
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3. Arnett, 11 January 2005.

4. Dunn, 19 January 2005.

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8. Anthony Kerch, Captain U.S. Marine Corps., "Contemporary
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